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FROM DARKNESS TO DAWN.

BY

J. DAVID SMITH.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

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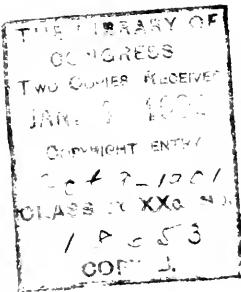
John David Smith

FROM DARKNESS TO DAWN.

BY

J. DAVID SMITH.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.



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BY
J. DAVID SMITH.

Dedicated to the memories of:

REV. MICHAEL E. STRIEBY, D. D., L.L. D.,

REV. GEORGE WHIPPLE, D. D.,

REV. ERASTUS M. CRAVATH, D. D.,

as a token of the high esteem in which they are respectively held by the long suffering colored people of America. As the pioneer secretaries, associate and respectively, of the American Missionary Association, they organized and directed with most wonderful success, one of the most potent forces in the missionary world, for the elevation of the colored race. From our point of view they were among the brightest stars of the Nineteenth Century. And the true value and influence of their lives and labors will only be realized in the centuries to come. They stand among that innumerable host of men

Who nurtured freedom's flower thro' countless years,
And watered it often with their blood and tears.

THE AUTHOR.

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS.

PRELUDE.

Down where the Southern zephyrs blow,
Where earth's sweet scented flowers bloom,
Where orchards bend with golden fruit,
And fields are white for wheel and loom;
Where streams of crystal waters flow,
There many tales of grief untold,
Have slept for centuries cold and mute,
That time to men may yet unfold.

By man's unmanly warp and bent,
To deal in falsehood more than truth,
To walk in darkness more than light,
To spurn the teachings of his youth,
To sin because he might repent,
To set at naught the "Law's" demand,
Come wrongs that blood and tears must right,
Shed by the First Born of the land.

Men say to God, by ways and acts,
That they cannot obey His Laws,—
The Golden Rule, " 'Tis out of date";
They read the Book to look for flaws:
To suit the case distort the facts.
A people proud thus met reverse,
That held men slaves by Church and State,
And brought on all a woeful curse.

The First Born, many brave, were slain—
The nation's pride, to pay the price
Of cruel wrongs to man by man.
One lesson oft will not suffice,
To make the hand of God quite plain;
Like Pharaoh and his legions proud—
Men still pursue the African
Thro' seas of blood—against the Cloud.

'Twas just before the dawn of day—
The darkest hour of slavery's night,
When all our hopes began to pale,
Far to the North we saw a light,
So strange it filled us with dismay,—
A red, and blood like cloud, arose
Therefrom, and spread out like a vail
Of fire, with vague and mystic pose.

The slave had brought his unknown task,
 Upon his sore and bleeding back;
 But few had brought the task required—
 The weight in basket, and in sack.
 Beneath the thick and heavy mask
 Of night, we could not see the lash,
 That cut new flesh from creatures, tired
 And torn from daily toil and thrash.

The Driver and the Overseer
 Had finished up their evening task,
 Of smiting men in stocks and chains,
 Too hard in heart to even ask,
 Of illness, and to offer cheer,
 To souls, that plead with lisping breath,
 To be delivered from their pains—
 Tho by the cruel hand of death.

The clock had struck the hour of ten,
 Each mother went to nurse her child,
 And bake the meager “Indian” pone.
 The night was weird and strangely wild,
 Intensified by the moods of men.
 Some sought the cluster’s nigh to pray,
 And chant their songs with plaintive moan,
 And scowled to hear the banjo play.

Despite their chains and pangs of woe,
 The “Likely” girls, and lively boys,
 Would gather on some suitful spot
 And hold a round of fleeting joys—
 “To trip the restless heel and toe,”
 And sing play songs, for which we pine—
 Because their “Lore” we have forgot,
 I’d give a crown for every line.

It was a most eventful night,—
 Amid their frolics, sad and gay,
 Some wakeful serfman gave a shout,
 That sent a thrill of wild dismay,
 And woke the sleepers with a fright,
 In all the neighborhood around.
 “The world’s on fire”! the man sung out;
 And some fell prostrate on the ground.

Some thought the "Judgment" was at hand,
 For all the Northern sky was red—
 As though a cloud of blood and fire,
 From North arose and slowly spread:
 The scene we could not understand—
 That vast Aurora and its cause.
 We sought the "Oracle" to inquire,
 And heard her "soothe" with breathless pause.

The prophetess—"Old Aunty Jane"—
 First sighed and shook her "Frosty" head,—
 Then raised her keen and searching eyes—
 Like some inspired Saint, she said:
 "De meanin' ob dis sight is plain
 Ter me: a great and bloody war,
 Is shown to us up in de skies—
 An' armays comin' frum afar."

"Jus' like you sees dat fiery cloud
 Sweep ober frum de Norf, jus' so,
 Dars comin' a mighty hos',
 Ter smite de lan' frum sho' to sho',
 An' oberthrow dese mosters proud,
 Dat hol' de chains dat bin' us slaves,
 Ter humble men what strut and boas',—
 Da'er sons shall fill untimely graves."

"De cup ob weakidness is full,
 De day ob reckonin' is at han';
 Our groans and cries de Lawd has heared.
 He'll smite de fus' born ob de lan'—
 Soon shell His armays cum, and pull
 Down slabery's frownin' walls, and set
 De Black Folks free: so trus' His word,
 For God de jus' is reignin' yet."

" Now, ebery one shell keep his tongue,
 Not one ob you my words may tell,
 Till all dese things shell cum ter pass,—
 Be faithful, and hit shell be well.
 De omens dese bloody clouds hab brung—
 Dey tells ob wars, and seas of blood.—
 Ter blas' de herb and pale de grass,—
 Ter kill de flow'r—in de bud."

When "Aunty" Jane had ceased to speak,
 The sky had cleared, the stars shone bright:
 But sleep forsook our weary eyes.
 Few will forget, who saw that night,—
 Men were amazed for many a week.
 We had much faith in "Aunty" Jane.
 Her sayings all proved true and wise,
 She had a prophet's tongue and brain.

Next day the "Big-House" folks were all
 Astir. They talked about the "Northern Lights"—
 A vast Aurora—seldom seen
 To reach such grand, celestial heights.
 From all the words their lips let fall,
 'Twas plain to see, they had not read
 The signs, where "Aunty" Jane's soul keen
 Had scented armies' coming tread.

When men and nations prosper much,
 The cries of justice dull their ears,—
 Ambition's hand maps out their course.
 Men shame themselves for Godly fears,
 And brew excuses vain,—the such
 As might divorce them from the Law
 Of God,—assuming rights by force
 Of might, and hold the weak in awe.

The wisdom of the world, has been
 Too prone to bow to human rules,
 And often finds itself astray
 Along the shining paths of fools.
 Alas! this fatal bent of men—
 To re-enact the Laws of God—
 To break and cast their cords away,
 And dodge the chastening of His rod.

'Tis not by one great single leap,
 That men and nations go astray,—
 But, step by step, they lose the path
 Of right: we trust, because we pray,
 The winds we sow we shall not reap—
 The whirlwinds, when they come to crush
 Us in their fury and their wrath,—
 When men shall face their shame and blush.

So, like the king of Babylon,
 The haughty South thought all secure:
 She worshipped God, and gave Him thanks,
 And claimed His sanction: though not sure
 That slavery was divine, upon
 It, right or wrong, the South would stand.
 Tho meddlers oft disturbed her ranks,
 Who might resist her dauntless hand?

How oft the world repeats the old
 Mistakes, and meets the same old fate!
 God will not leave us in disgust,
 Because we dare repudiate
 His rule,—rebel and quit the fold.
 Of righteousness will God despair,
 Because we lose our faith and trust,
 And treat our fellow-men unfair?

The blood of all the ages spilt,
 Cries from the bosom of the earth,
 And speaks with woeful tongues of fire,
 From Heaven's altars old; but dearth
 Will quicker men convince of guilt,
 Than all the pleas of right and wrong.
 But right must come of man's desire,
 Or God will hold His chastenings long.

Just when the masters sung of peace
 The clouds were gathering fast for war.
 The witless ones within their ranks—
 Fools born beneath some luckless star,
 Still plotting how they might increase
 The powers of hell,—just fired a shot
 To scare and warn the “Yankee cranks”:
 Its dire results then saw they not.

Fools reveling at the festive board,
 Unmindful of the “Open gates”—
 And countless legions marching through,
 To smite its lords and potentates—
 The clash without of shield and sword,
 Saw not the hand of God that wrote
 Upon the wall, nor could construe
 The meaning of its fatal note.

FROM DARKNESS TO DAWN.

THE world has sung of the men and arms, that first
 Came down and smote the South, and laid it waste,
 The while men strove to break the ties and burst
 The bands of union in their maddened haste.

Yet rather of the saints of light I sing,
 Who bore upon the Cross the lamp of truth,
 And came to us from this fair land to bring,
 Enlightenment to the aged and the youth.

How dear to my peoples' heart is this North land.
 Its very rocks and hills, its dens and caves,
 We love, that gave our fathers shelter, and
 Made sacred by the bloody tracks of slaves.

Those glassy seas whence comes the Aurora grand,
 Oft lighting up the world in golden hues—
 That casts a halo over sea and land,
 And North reflects to South enchanting views.

We gaze on yon North Star in sweet delight,
 Still swinging in the arch of Freedom's gate—
 Once guide to the "Fugitive Slave" in lonely flight,
 Escaping from the bonds of men and state.

Oft now we wander toward this Polar Star,
 To seek a land where peace and justice reign,
 Where stands across our path no cruel bar,—
 Where we may enter fields of brawn and brain.

O, North! sweet land that gave our fathers rest,
 And still a refuge and a safe retreat.
 There swells in every Freedman's humble breast
 A love for thee our tongues cannot repeat.

O, fairest East, whence comes the rising sun—
 Whence came to us the Star of Bethlehem,
 And wise men coming with the Blessed One,
 To bring the Gifts that He required of them.

The noblest work on earth that man can do
 For God, is that to help his fellow-men—
 To bear the lamp of truth to every hue
 And tribe, and lead them up the heights of ken.

The onward swing of the starry realms of night
 Thro' the portals of the azure firmament,
 Must fade from view amid the dawning light,
 And leave the world to toiling mortals sent.

The universe is one vast realm of light,—
 Those sparkling worlds, might be, far glowing arcs,
 Where currents through an endless space unite,
 And earths, and moons, are but the dying sparks.

But down the stretches of the yet unknown,
 Material things must vanish from the scene,
 No more to cast vague shadows before the throne
 Of light, nor time the future intervene.

Along the rugged road of life we trace
 The foot-prints bold of time, thro' blood and fire—
 'Tis there some hero fell to save his race,
 And here some Storied Urn of noble sire.

The onward tramp of nations, great and small,
 Each pressing sore to pass the other by—
 But hew the stones to mark their rise and fall,
 And show the graves where human follies lie.

A righteous people prosper in their ways.
 The East may plant, the West may water, the flower:
 The increase comes from God, in oft relays.
 Who spreads on field the sunshine and the shower.

Amid the sober scenes of life and death,
 Sad recollections come with tales to tell
 That hold us under spells with bated breath—
 When tyrants reigned, and empires rose and fell.

O, memory! fleet courier from the past,
 Thy stories make our hearts both glad and sore—
 These chains and stocks that held our fathers fast—
 The auction pen—its bloody deeds of yore!

Some scene the Waterloo of human might—
 Some sacred spot where a John Brown gave his blood,
 Some Plymouth Rock, that marks the Pilgrims' flight—
 The ark that took the world across the flood.

A Harriet Beecher Stowe that broke the spell,
 And moved a cold and stubborn world to tears;
 A Sumpter's timely gun that spoke the knell
 Of cruel slavery—startling all the seers.

To many a spot we come with reverent tread,
 The shoes about our weary feet removed—
 And view the scene with bowed, uncovered head,
 Of deeds that time has sealed and God approved.

There Lincoln fell and joined the martyred host,
 Whose blood will ever keep his foot-prints red,
 And mark the road that leads to duty's dying post—
 To fires aflame that living saints may tread.

Far down beyond dear "Olives'" sunny brow,
 The Son of God low in a manger lay:
 Behold, the wise men fall, and angels bow,
 And worship a King there born in humble way.

The Saviour healed the sick and raised the dead,
 And dwelt among the poor, a brother, friend—
 A King; yet had not where to lay His head.
 No serfs, or maidens fair, His wants to attend.

Christ stands in "Pilate's judgment hall" alone,
 Despised of men—forsaken of His friends.
 "I find no fault in Him—no guilt is shown,"
 Saith Pilate the judge: "How say you He offends?"

By threatening hints of Rome, the mob prevailed,
 And Christ was led away to Calvary's hill;
 His feet and hands to the fatal wood were nailed.
 Thus Jesus died to do His Father's will.

When tired of God, and of the Law's restraints,
 Men feign their doubts, to license open sin.
 When God rebukes, they rise and slay the saints;
 Fools hate the light and all that walk therein.

To wade thro' slaughter's blood to mercy's throne
 And offer incense there to God, the just,
 But shows a man that hell might blush to own—
 That mocks while saints lie humbled in the dust.

Each burning stake where some brave Christian fell,
 Still marks the path where faith and duty lead—
 Tho oft we grope our way thro' the mists of hell,
 Bestirred by men who serve a mocking creed.

Hark! guiltless voices cry from out the flames,
 Beseeching God's forgiveness for the men
 Who built the fires beneath their mortal frames!
 Tho smitten oft, they smite not back again.

WELL might we sing of arms, and heroes bold,
 Whose deeds light up the dizzy heights of fame;
 Their glory human tongue has never told;
 No warrior's breast e'er heaved with nobler aim.

The man who fights for truth, and human right,
 Shall have his name on God's own honored roll:
 Who spoils the weak by power human might,
 The mantle of shame shall veil his blackened soul.

The world will cease to learn the arts of war
 When man shall cease to do his fellows ill;
 A Savior's love will be the guiding star,
 When men return to God, and do His will.

The reign of Christ comes not by force of arms;
 He is the Morning Star of love, and peace.
 His life, His blood and tears, and words, hath charms
 That move men's souls—His kingdom shall increase.

The warrior, right or wrong, must meet his doom.
 Who wields the sword, shall perish by the sword:
 Proud nations fall, and sink in moral gloom,
 And bring to honor's field the vulgar horde.

Behold the Captain of the dauntless hosts.
 He leads the "armies of the living God."
 Man puts his earthly armor on and boasts,
 The sooner to fall beneath the tyrant's rod.

A victory in the wrong brings back defeat,
 For he who "wades thro slaughter to a throne,"
 Will make it but a Nero's bloody seat,—
 While crafty men his sins, and crimes, condone.

That God of justice rules His kingdom yet,
 And He will not forsake the humblest soul:
 He will avenge our wrongs tho long we fret,
 While the tides of time thro' seas of blood may roll.

One righteous man shall put a host to flight:
 About him are the unseen armies vast
 That wait to crush the power of cruel might;
 For truth and right shall conquer at the last.

While men are drifting on the seas of doubt,
 Upon its rocks the ship of faith may wreck—
 The Star is lost, the light within goes out,
 That same old serpent lies upon the deck.

But God has always found a faithful few,
 Who follow not the multitude and throng:
 And from the rostrum, pulpit, press and pew,
 They wield a power for justice firm and strong.

They ne'er presume to go behind the returns
 Of God, or set their country's law aside:
 Nor would condone the hand that flays and burns
 A living soul, for whom a Savior died.

The Jews once slaved in Egypt's mighty land.
 And Pharaoh forged a scheme—he deemed it wise—
 To kill their new born males, and gave command,
 But Israel's God had heard their groans and cries.

God sent His servant, Moses, down to lead
 His children out of bonds, and make them free.
 He stood before the King to intercede,
 But Pharaoh failed the hand of God to see.

And Egypt's land was cursed—the "First Born" slain—
 Then Moses led the children through the sea
 And wilderness, on to the Jordan plain,
 And gave them law divine, and liberty.

But Pharaoh mused within his subtle heart,
 And soon repented he had let them go.
 His wise men, learned in every human art,
 Assured him chance had brought his kingdom woe.

With arms and warriors plumed, and armored grand,
 The king pursued the armless Israel fast,
 And rushed against Jehovah's unseen hand,
 With chariots, horsemen bold, his armics vast.

Between the watery walls of the deep Red sea,
 Where Moses led the children through dry shod,
 The Egyptians met the Lord, and turned to flee;
 All perished by the hand of Israel's God.

That God yet stands within the shadow nigh—
 The Savior dwells among the poor of earth,
 And knows their tears, their groans and every sigh.
 Some day he'll test our work and prove its worth.

Go preach the Gospel Truth to every man,
 In whatsoever clime they chance to dwell,
 Yea, go wherever the great blue arches span,
 Reclaim the race and shut the gates of hell.

Behold, the Son of God—the Prince of Peace,
 Who left the glory of His courts above,
 Where legions of angels His praises never cease,
 To save the fallen and lead them by His love.

But wolves of men in robes of God's meek Lamb
 Came down upon the Ethiopian fold,
 Whose gospel proved a deadly snare and sham,
 Betraying Christ to the gods of lust, and gold.

In hope that grace and mercy would abound,
 They put the Africans in stocks and chains,
 And drove them to the marts the world around.
 Whose blood shall wash away that slavery's stains?

Each woeful day the slaveman's burden grew—
 The stake, and stocks, the lash, the auction pen,
 The huntsman's horn its daily signal blew,
 To set the chase upon the trails of men.

Oh, weeping mother, old with time and toil.
 And hast thou found thy child—thy darling one
 They took and sacrificed to lust, and spoil,
 And mocked thee when their hellish work was done?

Their own begotten, heartless fathers sold,
 Unmindful of their own blood within their veins.
 Their infamy the half was never told—
 Of all the shame. Alas! the proof remains.

WHEN Noah's Ark came down on Ararat's peaks
 The father of the races all then went
 Forth, after many stormy days and weeks,
 Into the plains, and pitched his humble tent.

His vineyards soon brought forth their ruddy vine;
 He drank thereof to everlasting shame,
 And lay beneath his own "fig tree and vine,"—
 And ethics now would have him bear the blame.

But Ham, his second son, so chanced to see
 His father there exposed to human gaze,
 And told his brothers—thoughtless of fate was he:
 They backed and shrouded the scene in mystic maze.

When father Noah, from out his wine awoke,
 Upon his grandson Canaan pronounced a curse;
 For what his father said, no doubt in joke,
 A servant his son should be, but nothing worse.

Now Canaan was of Ham the youngest son.
 Whose bounds were mapped out clear in Holy Writ.
 The "Land of Canaan" had its courses run
 So plain, who knows it not, is small of wit.

When Israel back from Egypt's land returned,
 'Twas then the "Curse on Canaan" was fulfilled.
 To be "drawers of water, and hewers of wood," and spurned
 For rank deceit, was all that Noah willed.

The elder sons of Ham were Menes, Cush,
 And Put: who left this Canaan on the spot,
 And journeyed south afar thro' plain and bush,
 To Africa's unknown climes to choose their lot.

Here Menes founded Egypt of world renown,
 The first great civil monarchy on earth—
 Where the mystic waters of the Nile roll down,
 His swarthy sons gave art and culture birth.

And Ethiopia was her sister fair—
 She sprang from out the loins of Cush:
 One king oft had the crown of both to wear—
 The will of one was but the other's wish.

Their peoples excelled in learning and in art,
 Which still provoke the world's admiring gaze:
 Their armies, fleets, and fruits of field and mart,
 Left fame the doom of time can never raze.

From these great sires the sable races sprung
 That spread from out that once fair land:
 We came, but little of their greatness bring,
 Save traits of mind, and skill, these time withstand.

"But Ah!" will say some self-conceited knave,
 You bring from Noah's tent the curse of Ham—
 The blackman's doom to be the whiteman's slave:"
 A gospel preached by many a Christian sham.

But Canaan was the only cursed one;
 To Africa his children never went,
 But staid nigh where the Jordan's waters roll,
 Where all their sad and woeful days were spent.

On Mizraim, Cush and Put, no shadow fell
 Of curse to put their children under bans;
 But cursed were men who schemed to buy and sell
 As chattels in the marts, these Africans.

Whom God doth favor most, oft prove the worst
 Of men; His Laws they would revise and change
 To suit the bent of man's desire—his thirst
 For power and gold—to fit some doctrine strange.

The word of God, for license men mistook,
 To seize their fellow-men and bind them slaves.
 The paths their fathers trod they soon forsook,
 And grasped the sword, to conquer peaceful braves.

That awful blunder of a Christian age,
 For centuries doomed a race to bonds and chains,
 And cause the bloodiest war on history's page
 To blot it out: Alas! its sting remains.

Had not a Christian era been deceived,
 By men who claimed to be both good and wise—
 That slavery was divine—which men believed,
 It never would have wept a nation's eyes.

When men are on some wicked mission bent,
 They feign would have the world believe them just,
 So vain excuses they must needs invent,
 Lest honest men their subtle schemes mistrust.

Hear, Moses had an Ethiopian wife,
 But the commentaries of a great divine,
 Explain, and cast a cloud o'er Moses' life—
 "Twas not Zipporah, but his concubine."

To save him from what men would call disgrace,
 They make the man of God a libertine,
 And prove him guilty of a sin so base
 That Moses' life would seem a thing obscene.

'Tis not made plain in story, nor Holy Writ,
 As claimed, the Queen of Sheba was a Jew:
 From all the light we have men must admit,
 She sprang from Cush, of ebon hue.

When men presume to go behind the Word
 Of God—besmoking up its teachings plain
 With Satan's torch, they mar and make absurd,
 And more obscure the things they might explain.

To re-enact the laws of God men dare,
 As much to say He did not understand
 Their earthly needs, and made His laws unfair,
 At when He made the universe so grand.

Some fools still think the "Ark of God" will fall,
 Unless they hold it on the jolting cart.
 To tamper with the Law doth not appall
 Some men, who mar the whole by changing part.

And, outraged, God His wrath may long withhold;
 His righteous vengeance sure will some day fall
 On every evil work of men, ten fold,
 Tho hedged about with a Babylonian wall.

O, foolish man, canst thou no wisdom learn?
 Behold the wreck and ruin along the trail of time.
 "The Unknown God" that made the scale to turn,
 Doth still avenge the wrongs begot of crime.

The wisdom of the world availeth naught,
 And man's opinions changeth not the Law,
 Nor can bedim the lesson Jesus taught—
 With hell's besmoking torch to find a flaw.

Let not my bleeding people once forget
 Their God, tho Pharaohs march behind us still,
 The walls of some Red sea are framing yet,
 And God will every promise made fulfill.

O, Ethiopia, know thy God; 'twas He
 That brought thee out of bondage, thro' seas of blood,
 To Sinaite plains of light, and made us free;
 Some day He'll take us across the Jordan flood.

But God will hardly do for man the things—
 That lie within the reaches of man's pow'r,
 Who strives not for the goal, no victory brings,
 Nor laurels wears in some triumphal hour.

A MUTINIED ship of captives found afloat,
 And drifting whitherto they scarcely knew,
 And though unskilled in craft to sail the boat,
 Had slain the Captain, and overcame the crew.

The law reached forth its stern and mighty arm,
 To punish the stolen, guileless Africans;
 But men arose who stayed its stroke and harm,
 And justice thwarted the schemes of subtle clans.

They calmed the rage of public sentiment—
 Demanded fairness for the men accused:
 And took no thought of means and labor spent
 To save both men and state from being abused.

The captives all were freed and set adrift,
 Among a people strange—in a stranger land.
 And few of them his alien tongue could lift
 To tell his wants or seek a helping hand.

The hands that saved them from a nameless shame,
 Forsook them not amid their dark despair:
 With heart and purse, all moved by lofty aim,
 They builded wiser than they were aware.

With the charm of gentle deeds, and Christian love,
 The strangers within their gates were housed and fed:
 With kindly hands that wore no Pharisee's glove
 They broke to them the "True and living Bread."

A mighty question of the day was solved—
 The worth and future of the African,
 Wherein the nation's safety was involved—
 To free the slave and help him be a man.

"The Amistad Club" thus had its noble birth,
 A sturdy band of men and women, bold—
 To free the slave and prove his higher worth—
 Who broke his chains and placed him in the fold.

Tho long provoked by shams of church and state,
 They built the A. M. A. on higher planes,
 Where the voice of "Silence" might no more dictate
 To them to keep hands off the bondman's chains.

To all the world this was their simple creed:
 "Ill gotten gains shall not our hands defile;
 Who holds his fellow-man by chattel deed
 Shall be debarred—his gold, and dealings vile."

"No compromise with slavery and its cause;
 A universal brotherhood of man,
 We claim for all, with no exclusive clause;
 All must be free from slavery's curse and ban."

And thus that most stupendous work began,
 To save a race for God, despoiled by men.
 To them God said: "Go teach the African."
 To prove their love for Him, it might have been.

What saints of God, so pure, might be afraid
 To touch a soul beneath a blackened skin—
 To save the humblest creature God has made
 From something worse—the dreadful curse of sin.

Some Lazarus often lies before our gate,
 While kindly dogs may come and lick his sores,
 And angels for the lingering soul may wait,
 Men proud and haughty drive him from their doors.

Into the fields went forth God's faithful few,
 Along the fiery track of a timely war,
 Those once dark regions opened up to view—
 The South to catch the light from North afar.

It was a Herculean task for all;
 The A. M. A., the first to take the field,
 Had waited not to hear the Freedman's call,
 Nor for his master's stubborn will to yield.

One grand old church of God, that never stained
 Its robes with slavery's blood and shame, nor had
 Its ranks divided once, by men who feigned
 It right, led all to bear the tidings glad.

'Twas not alone the most of gold she gave,
 But consecrated men and women, too,
 Who shed their blood, and tears, black souls to save,
 And start them on the way of life anew.

Tho freed from human bands and torturing pains,
 Thro' centuries of barbarous servitude,
 We stood alone upon the world's cold plains.
 Amid the dawn of day, unmade and rude.

The Angels of the North, on wings of love,
 Came down and found us friendless, halt and blind.
 With tireless hands—souls gentle as a dove—
 They opened "the gates of mercy on mankind."

The soul of the slave is but a bastile dark,
 His thoughts and tongue but trembling prisoners be,
 There doomed to feel their rotting chains; and, hark!
 The tread and knock of truth to set them free.

How beautiful are the gentle hands that taught
 Us then to know our own dark minds' true worth,
 And, though with doubts, and difficulties fraught,
 By them, we had a new and nobler birth.

No shallow draughts to intoxicate the brain
 They gave—drink deep the old “Pierian Spring,”
 They said to all, that so we might regain
 Our manhood, stunned by slavery’s deadly sting.

Into the valleys of the shadows of death, sweet streams
 Of light came, crowning their work with grand success:
 The Freedman passed from out the vale of dreams
 Up wisdom’s rugged heights with manliness.

Boast not, ye favored sons of rank and wealth
 Of your achievements born of brain and skill,
 While men with naught to boast but mind and health
 Have wrought the same, and toiled to pay the bill.

The Negro has his friends, and, too, his foes,
 The one to help him make the best of life,
 The other to aggravate his daily woes—
 Obstruct his path in every noble strife.

God wisely gave us friends, all true and tried—
 Who dared to face the sword and cannon’s mouth.
 No greater heroes be than they who died
 To take the light of freedom to the South.

The “Yankee teacher” was to us a Godsend,
 The greatest event in all our history:
 Not even the lights of Egypt might contend
 For honors here, with all their mystery.

For neither threats of men, nor schemes of states
 Could coax or drive them from a righteous cause,
 Against the remorseless tides of human hates
 To strive; yet sought they not the world’s applause.

WE stood by old Kentucky’s sunny shores
 And watched the Ohio’s mighty waters roll,—
 Then Fugitive slaves with naught but bleeding sores
 To plead for help, or pay the boatman toll.

We gazed upon the grand old glorious state—
 “On to Ohio” was the watch word then.
 Ohio was to freedom the “open gate”
 Among the states of anti-slavery men.

L. of C.

The "U. G. R." ran there for Fugitive slaves,
 And reached about to every shire and farm.
 Within her secret lodges, dens and caves,
 Our fathers hid, with none to hurt or harm.

Ohio's name echoes with magic charm—
 The Keystone of the royal arch of states,
 Whose hearths kept freedom's fires aglow to warm
 The trembling slave that came within their gates.

When coming nations scan the honored list,
 There many a Fairfield's name will catch their praise,
 Who led the Fugitive slave on through mist,
 And turned pursuit to trails of mystic maze.

From out her bosom came great men afire,
 To fight for freedom—both for frame and mind—
 Thence came a Strieby, moving every shire,
 To send the light to Samsons shorn and blind.

He stirred the loyal churches of the land
 To enter and possess this virgin field,
 Tho all the powers of darkness might withstand.
 He led the hosts, and "fell upon his shield."

To them had come the chance of life, to do
 That work most men despise, and often shun,
 Which God intrusts alone to the chosen few—
 The noblest work for man beneath the sun.

No tempting prospects lay before their eyes—
 No earthly crowns the victors might acquire:
 Afar from homes beloved, and friendship's ties,
 To toil for human souls, with petty hire.

Who shall believe our word, and strange report?
 The faithful "Yankee teachers" mobbed, we saw;
 The culprits feared no threatenings of the court,
 And slipped between the fingers of the law.

The heathen might reject the Gospel Truth,
 And slay the prophets sent to save his race;
 But worse is he—the Christian knave—forsooth,
 Who plots to keep a people in disgrace.

When love controls the aims of human deeds,
 Then fruits divine will all our labors bear—
 For love will always go where Jesus leads,
 Tho oft she too the crown of thorns must wear.

For love, and truth, both wear the crown of thorns,
 And drag thro' time their cruel chains and clogs,
 While lying prophets come with brazen horns,
 Deceive the kings, and feed their blood to dogs.

God chose a Strieby, Whipple, and Cravath,
 And glory crowns the wisdom of His choice;
 Their feet once never swerved from duty's path,
 They followed the whisperings of the Master's voice.

They were Captains of a mighty host,
 Of consecrated men and women sent,
 To light the regions dark within our coast:
 And oft alone some faithful sister went.

Along the warriors bare and fiery trail,
 They found no castles grand, or gilded halls;
 Some humble cabin by the wood and dale,
 Oft served, graced since by splendid college walls.

The Yankees builded wiser than they knew—
 The church, the "mission schools," the home and field—
 New England "slopping o'er" her golden dew,
 And now the Yankee Negro is revealed.

The protege comes nigh the prototype,—
 Far around these cynosures of light, you find
 A people free from rum, the weed and pipe—
 The Yankee set in black, in heart and mind.

Their vices and their crimes are happily few,
 Compared to others of their kin; and small,
 Set over against the men of lighter hue,
 To know this truth is worth a crown to all.

On honor's field a cruel slavery died,
 On the mission field a race was born again,
 To a nobler manhood as the ocean wide—
 From slave evolved the loyal citizen.

The things we've learned: the worth of time and gold,
 To rise above our own environments,
 On wings of truth and virtue, and these to hold,
 And shun the deadly cup, "at all events."

Imbued, with true and loyal pride of race—
 To prize our own, as we would others, high—
 Our maidens and matrons full of comely grace,
 While weaker visions often passed them by.

Oh, North, to thee, an everlasting debt
 Of gratitude this bleeding people owe—
 But thou canst not lay down thine armour yet,
 For thereon hangs the nation's weal, or woe.

The wrongs we've suffered all these woeful years,
 Unsought forgiveness, have we learned to give,
 To men who mingle our cup with blood and tears,
 And make our days on earth a burden to live.

This hope sustains the soul—that God is just,
 And not unmindful of our wrongs untold:
 Tho long crushed down by might, trust Him we must—
 The cause of right on earth He will uphold.

Let every wanderer, to God return—
 Awake from sin's intoxicating spell—
 No more the wine and milk of wisdom spurn,
 For many drink the deadly scum of hell.

With eyes bedimmed, by the mists of sin, in vain
 We strive to reach the promised land of peace;
 We ride to hell in chariots of lust and gain,
 And complain to God, when troubles do not cease.

'Twas so with Israel in the wilderness—
 They soon forgot the God that set them free;
 Rebellion brought them shame and long distress—
 They wandered forty years beyond the sea.

Alas! not all have come within the light,
 For some about the throne of hell still train,
 And wither away beneath its curse and blight—
 Run down by the chariot wheels of rum, and slain.

A people when true to themselves, and, true to God,
 Will rise against the tides of human might;
 The paths that faith and duty long have trod,
 Still lead us up the rugged mountain height.

The things foretold of men in Holy Writ--
 Of their oft disobedience and their fall,
 How true all come to pass, we shall admit,
 When forced to drink the "wormwood and the gall."

And all that has been done, to save the race,
 Is lost unless we from our cups refrain:
 The wise foresee, and seek a hiding place,
 But tools pass on, and by their gods are slain.

A tippling race will soon itself destroy,
 Its own delusions lead on blindly down,
 The stretches broad and steep, to hell's decoy,
 Where Satan strips it of its pride and crown.

The future race of men on earth to rule,
 Will from its wine and deadly cups abstain.
 When men—yea nations, quaff and play the fool,
 The sceptre departs to sober brawn and brain.

For wise men profit by the thing they learn,
 To do the right, makes up their craft and creed—
 But fools will have a master hard and stern—
 Whose yoke will bend their necks and make them bleed.

Oh, Ethiopia! to thyself take heed,
 Be not deceived by snares of disbelief,
 To follow paths where lying prophets lead,
 And bring us down to lasting shame and grief.

Some Achan oft may curse the Christian camp—
 To take some golden wedge, will not refrain—
 Tho' God forbids beneath His seal, and stamp,
 Some Babylonish garment would obtain.

Dear Ethiopia, bowed beneath the weight
 Of time—by foes without and knaves within,
 Who strive to have thee lewd and dissipate,
 Be not deceived by men who claim thy kin.

THE star of Africa shall rise again,
 Above the rimless scope of mental realms,
 To blend its rays with suns of brighter skies,
 The dawning now the darkness overwhelms.

Our ancient sires gave letters to the Greeks,
 Who passed the scroll of knowledge down, intact,
 To coming ages;—vainly falsehood seeks
 To prove, that Egypt's people were white—in fact.

In the arts of numbers Euclid has no peer—
 The story of the sage, when plainly told,
 But shows he was a black man, yet we hear
 Some tongues declare, he was a Greek, behold!

The argument set forth is but the same;
 "A negro mind like that? Oh, how absurd!"
 The facts are changed to fit a theory's claim,
 And, unsuspecting, men accept their word.

'Twas strange he did not live and flourish in Greece;
 Why wander off, from Athens, to Africa,
 To build among her flocks of swarthy geese,
 And draw across his track the mystic bar?

Because we do not now possess a thing,
 Proves not, the thing we never did possess;
 'Tis of the *past* of Rome and Greece, we sing—
 The glories of centuries, sadly growing less.

And boast thou not ye haughty nations of men;
 The stern, relentless hand of doom will come,
 And take from thee thy crown, the glory then
 Will soon depart, now under seal for some.

Then rob us not of Egypt's glory, past,
 Nor Ethiopia's greatness—nigh the same;
 The sons of Ham, who built those empires vast,
 Hand down to us the glories of their fame.

In Africa, the intellectual fires
 First burned, that lighted up the world in thought,
 And every noble art; our sable sires
 Excelled in all that mind and skill had wrought.

Geometry was born beside the Nile—

At when their landmarks oft were swept away,
When the swelling waters spread for many a mile,
And landlords had their fields to re-survey.

They built the world's first civil monarchy:

The first great military empire known,
Was founded by a son of Cush—for he
Long reigned upon the Babylonian throne.

For Nimrod was a mighty one, in earth—

The first to marshal men in armies vast,
And not a “Huntsman”—given to sport and mirth;
He called his legions, by the trumpet's blast.

The mighty realm, and cities great he built—

The greatest known to all antiquity—
His armies proud like walls of steel, begilt,
All prove his generalship and pedigree.

In fine and useful arts—in crafts of state,

Their past provokes the world's admiring gaze;
The “Lost Arts,” four thousand years ahead of date,
Have never been restored since *their* proud days.

The learned Thales—a noted Grecian sage,

Spent many years in Egypt's famous schools—
A thing with scholars then the common rage—
To master “Figures” and their rigid rules.

For thirty years sojourned Pythagoras,

(A Greek philosopher of world renown),
In Egypt, at the fountain head, to amass
The knowledge that won for him the wise man's crown.

Thus, filtered through the Latin and the Greek,

This wisdom of our fathers, of the past,
Comes down to us in all the tongues we speak—
The ancient gold in modern molds recast.

Once more we start upon the rugged march,

To loftier heights, than Egypt's sages dreamed—
Led by some star, still swinging in the arch
Of freedom's gate, the race shall be redeemed.

We come to where the endless roads divide,
 From either way there is no turning back,—
 To us now comes the moment to decide—
 To swerve, or follow duty's crimson track.

Awake, O Sons of Africa, awake,
 It is the time to strive for nobler things!
 Frown down this spoiling brother, for our sake—
 Let truth and virtue, be our sturdy wings.

That virtue, lust and gold cannot defile,
 Would proudly toil and wear a tattered gown,
 Than strut in robes of shame, in grandest style,
 Nor cruel hand of want may drag it down.

We pass the stage to blindly imitate,
 Some other people's virtues—and vices, too:
 Not merely to absorb, but now create
 In the realms of thought, and hew our lines as true.

When men shall strive to right the wrongs they've done—
 Extend a friendly hand to help the race,
 They had despoiled—its faults will fade to none,
 This failed, fault finding comes in bad, bad taste.

For the centuries of woeful slavery spent,
 There come to us no tokens of reward;
 The men who held the chains do not repent,
 For still their bloody hands are pressing hard.

To handicap a man, and then complain,
 Because he does not keep abreast—in the race
 Of life, proves not he's dull in brawn and brain,
 But a thing unjust, and false upon its face.

The empty bag we'll never stand on end—
 The bird, encaged, may never learn to fly—
 The eagle, plucked of wings, cannot ascend
 And proudly sweep across the azure sky.

No greater crime in all the universe—
 Than to mar the image of God, in me so plain,
 What fate on earth could fall upon me worse,
 Than have the light blown out within my brain.

And woe to men who cause one soul, the least
 Of God on earth, to stumble or offend!
 Who drags me down on common with the beast,
 The thing he dreads, will reach him in the end.

The men who claim we have no rights, which they
 Are duty bound to honor, or respect,
 Will neither respect man's laws, nor God obey—
 Whose Son they feign to love, His word reject.

Had Pharaoh heeded well the warnings sent,
 To loose the chains, and let Israel go in peace,
 He might have saved himself from punishment,
 In the grasp of doom, when came there no release.

Against thy fellow no false witness bear,
 Nor judge the many, by the faults of the few;
 To judge thee likewise, would be just as fair—
 The measure ye mete, God measures back to you.

“Oh, give me liberty or give me death”—
 The rights set forth in my dear Father's will—
 That fall to us as heirs by God's bequeath;
 Who robs me then of these, shall fare but ill.

When freed from a slavery worse than bonds and chains
 The problem, long to vex, both man and state,
 We shall work out—when justice here obtains;
 Give back our human rights, then watch and wait.

A liberty that takes the liberty
 Of other men, thus digs its own deep grave;
 A sham republic is worse than monarchy—
 The place where knaves may rule and rabbles rave.

Then let “Eternal Justice” have her sway,
 To soothe our sorrows—wipe away our tears—
 A nation's debt to us, she will repay,
 And crush the hand of might that interferes.

Who would have liberty shall pay the price,
 It is a costly jewel to find and keep—
 Reserved for them who make the sacrifice—
 But black men fought for honors they never reap.

Be not deceived; God hates the Christian sham,
 And spares him not when the days of reckoning come;
 Like swelling floods that sweep away the dam,
 God's wrath is piling mountain high, for some.

Trust not in battleships, nor armies proud—
 Some David may cut off Goliath's head,
 Who stalks abroad, in armor boasting loud:
 But trust in God, and do the things He said.

For civilization long has gone astray—
 A sailing up and down the world afleet;
 That Gospel Jesus preached in humble way,
 Comes now by the cannon's mouth—"the bitter sweet."

Go "visit the blameless Ethiopian" then—
 Give back to him that upward look to God,
 Rekindle there Jehovah's light again,
 Who made us of one blood and common clod.

For out of Egypt, Princes yet shall come,
 Some day, who might "the rod of empire sway."
 When Ethiopia's hands shake not with rum,
 While stretching forth to God, who clears the way.

When at the hole of that said deadly asp,
 The child may safely play, or poke the den
 Of some dread Cockatrice, the world may grasp
 The truth, black men have minds as other men.

For North is North, and South is South, the twain
 Are twain, and twain, the twain shall never meet;
 But when great minds meet on one common plain,
 Then North or South must from its ground retreat.

What calls are these that greet our dull, cold ears?
 Hark! is it not the voice of Africa,
 Which fate has muffled for three thousand years?
 How answer we before the "Judgment Bar"?

As sure as come the darkness and the dawn,
 In Africa, two hundred million blacks.
 Now call to us to wake their brain and brawn;
 For we alone possess some stubborn facts.

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What possible things within those millions lie,
They might be saved from plunder and from spoil,
And made a mighty nation, by and by,
As might become the richness of their soil.

The first shall be the last, the last the first—
For some great master hand with blood and tears,
Shall water the flower till it shall heave and burst
Again, for Afric's Star now reappears.

Oh, North, a lasting debt of gratitude,
We owe to thee, who toiled like saintly seers,
To hew these diamonds in the rough and crude;
And still we plead to thee, with blood and tears.

Lead on ye kindly lights, still gently lead
Us on thro' the gloom of life's infested vale,
Where still our wandering people cry, and bleed,—
Lead on then friendly lights, or yet we fail.



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